

Members

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Rep. Terry Goodin
Rep. Phil Pflum
Rep. Phyllis Pond
Rep. Jeff Thompson
Rep. Sue Scholer
Sen. Luke Kenley, Vice-Chairman
Sen. Ron Alting
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Sen. Frank Mrvan
Sen. Earline Rogers
Sen. Connie Sipes



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT ISSUES

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 9, 2003
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., 404
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 3

Members Present: Rep. Greg Porter, Chairperson; Rep. Terry Goodin; Rep. Phil Pflum; Rep. Phyllis Pond; Rep. Jeff Thompson; Rep. Sue Scholer; Sen. Luke Kenley, Vice-Chairman; Sen. Teresa Lubbers; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Sen. Connie Sipes.

Members Absent: Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. Earline Rogers.

I. Call to Order

Representative Gregory Porter, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m. after declaring a quorum present to conduct business. The Chairman asked for a moment of silence for Governor Frank O'Bannon.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

The Chairman gave an overview of the topic, the education achievement gap between minority students and white students. He then introduced Suellen Reed, Superintendent of the Department of Education, to testify.

II. Testimony on the Education Achievement Gap

Superintendent Reed introduced the people present to testify for the DOE. She gave a status report on progress involving the education achievement gap and discussed meetings of the Education Roundtable involving the recent “No Child Left Behind” legislation.

The Chairman next recognized Terry Spradlin, DOE, to testify. Mr. Spradlin used a PowerPoint presentation and distributed to the Committee a status report on the current student population in Indiana involving certain specific education achievement indicators. (Available from Legislative Information Center as Exhibits A & B. This information is also available on the DOE website, www.doe.state.in.us.)

The Chairman called upon Wes Bruce, Assistant Superintendent, DOE, to testify. Mr. Bruce discussed ISTEP scores and gaps in achievement between minority and white students. Mr. Bruce and Gary Wallyn, DOE, described the DOE website, www.doe.state.in.us, that allows individuals to obtain achievement information by school building and school corporations.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Spradlin and Mr. Bruce the following topics:

- Special education funding weight for exceptionality and severity.
- Which exceptionalities are included in these statistics.
- Learning disability students and a comparison of their ISTEP results.
- Correlation between these statistics and the recent Indiana University analysis.
- Parent’s educational achievement as a funding indicator.
- Possible correlation between teacher experience and ISTEP scores.

The Chairman then introduced Dr. Valerie Lee, Professor of Education from the University of Michigan, to testify. Dr. Lee shared information with the Committee from her book, Inequality at the Starting Gate, involving educational achievement gaps and educational equity. She distributed a copy of her book to the members of the Committee.

Dr. Lee began her testimony by describing the scope and breadth of the data that was available to her in making the findings contained in the book. Virtually all of the data used in the study was derived from U.S. Department of Education’s Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K). The ECLS-K was a data collection effort that provided a nationally representative picture of kindergarten students. It noted differences in young children’s literacy and mathematics achievement scores by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) as they begin kindergarten. Her report also included differences in social background from a broad sampling of family and home conditions (number of children in a home, location of the home, books owned, weekly TV watched, computers in the home, visits to a library, parents who read to them, whether the child is an English language learner, whether the child is repeating kindergarten, the number of parents in the home, etc.). Dr. Lee noted that the data from this study includes 2 major strengths: (1) it allows researchers to make generalized findings, because of the large and

nationally representative sample of children and schools; and (2) it is longitudinal. Dr. Lee added that there is little reason to believe that Indiana's experience would be markedly different than that found in the national study.

Some of Dr. Lee's findings were as follows:

- (1) SES is strongly related to one's cognitive skills. SES accounts for more of the unique variation in cognitive scores than any other factor by far.
- (2) There are substantial differences by race or ethnicity in children's test scores as they begin kindergarten. Before even entering kindergarten, the average cognitive score of children in the highest SES group are 60% above the scores of the lowest SES group. Average math achievement is 21% lower for blacks than for whites and 19% lower for Hispanics.
- (3) Family structure and educational expectations have important associations with SES, race or ethnicity, and test scores, but much smaller than either race or SES.
- (4) Low-SES children tend to begin school at kindergarten in schools that have fewer resources and opportunities. In response to a question on what makes a high quality school, Dr. Lee pointed to several factors that were considered in her book: average academic skill level, diversity of academic skill level, average SES, diversity of SES, kindergarten class size, general school and parent outreach, kindergarten transition outreach, teachers' preparation, teachers' experience, teachers' collective responsibility, teachers' professional community, good vs. bad conditions near the school, public or private. She added that while not everyone would agree with all the factors, there would probably be consensus with anyone on half of them.

The Committee then discussed with Dr. Lee the following topics:

- Parents' literacy rates and educational achievement of the child.
- The trend of educational achievement gaps increasing over time.
- The use of all of these statistics to achieve the desired results.
- School quality variables.
- Attracting teachers to difficult schools.
- Organization of schools with more students close to the poverty level.

The Chairman then introduced Dr. Eileen Champagne, Principal of Washington Community School, to testify. Dr. Champagne testified on the structure and organization of the Washington Community School and distributed information to the Committee about community schools (Available from Legislative Information Center as Exhibit C). She also commented on the differing needs of children in different neighborhoods. Dr. Champagne also shared the benefits of community schools with the Committee.

The Chairman next introduced Jackie Garvey, Executive Director of the Indiana Center of Family, School and Community Partnerships (FSCP), to testify.

Ms. Garvey discussed the affect of parent involvement on the achievement gap. She spoke about the differences between the parents' perspective on the achievement gap, and teachers' and administrators' perspectives on this same issue. Ms. Garvey also distributed to the Committee a summary of the available early intervention programs to help parents

and families get involved (Available from Legislative Information Center as Exhibit D).

The Chairman called upon Senator Luke Kenley to report on his continuing work on Senate Bill 36 (SB 36) from the 2003 Indiana Legislative Session. Senator Kenley informed the committee he had a preliminary draft being prepared by the Legislative Services Agency, and that the Committee's input would be appreciated.

The Chairman next asked Betty Ayres, Indiana Staff Development Leadership Council, to testify. Ms. Ayres distributed a packet from the Indiana Staff Development Leadership Council (Available from Legislative Information Center as Exhibit E). She discussed the approaches that are being taken to address these achievement gaps and commented on the research done by the council on high-poverty, high-achieving schools. Ms. Ayres also gave many recommendations on what type of professional development should be undertaken by teachers and principals to better prepare them for the task of closing the achievement gap.

Claudia Wheatley testified along with Ms. Ayres. Ms. Wheatley reiterated the need for further professional development approaches to help teachers and principals close these achievement gaps.

The Committee discussed the need for many of the professional development issues to be addressed while the teachers are pursuing their undergraduate degree in education.

The Chairman asked Dr. Jacqueline Blackwell, President of the Association for Childhood Education International, to testify. Dr. Blackwell discussed the different possible approaches to closing the achievement gap, and implementing the Leave No Child Behind Act. Dr. Blackwell agreed to present her comments in writing to the Committee.

The Chairman then recognized Doug Williams, Superintendent of Perry Township Schools, to testify. Dr. Williams distributed information to the Committee on The Achievement Gap-Opportunity and Challenge (Available from Legislative Information Center as Exhibits G and H). He commented that closing the gap will require changes in the way schools are funded, in the way children are dealt with from birth to age 5, and in the way students are dealt with once they enter school. Dr. Williams encouraged the Committee to fund early education programs first and fully and to adopt the P-16 Plan for improving student achievement offered by the Education Roundtable.

Dr. Lowell Rose was introduced to testify. Dr. Rose highlighted more of the information in the materials that were distributed to the Committee by Dr. Williams. He asked the Committee not to get discouraged, and commented that the achievement gap can be closed. Dr. Rose also pointed out that the groups that are behind will not be able to catch up fast enough to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements.

The Committee discussed with Dr Rose: (1) the effect of special education on achieving the AYP; (2) the reasons behind going along with the No Child Left Behind Act; and (3) other state's approaches to implementation of No Child Left Behind.

IV. Adjournment and Other Business

The Chairman stated that another meeting date would be set sometime in the near future and

topics to be discussed will include: (1) SB 36, (2) SB 366, (3) narrowing the achievement gap and its fiscal impact.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 PM.